9:Sarkar D-5 (1948) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Jarawa

123 The second trip was made on March 12th 1948. Our party included Mr. JOSEPH and Mr. POOVIAH [1], both Sub-divisional Officers of the forest department, one Burman bush police and four Andamanese with their two canoes tied behind our motor boat. We followed the same route from Long Island and, reaching Spike Island, we anchored at its northeastern corner. We came ashore in the canoes. The beach was small and rocky. Part of it was sheltered on one side by huge rocks behind which the Jarawa were known to waylay those approaching from the sea. So we landed very cautiously. Just at [501] [824] the outskirts of the jungle we saw huge bundles of short bamboo lengths tied to one another and piled up in a heap. It was a Jarawa raft. Near the bamboo pile were three crude paddles split from the spadix of the palm called *Nipa fruticans*. We were all the more careful in our approach.

[361] Soon we came upon a clearing in the jungle. There was no Jarawa, but all around we saw traces of a temporary halt of a large party. We counted nineteen [342] fireplaces. At a distance from the fireplaces we saw a small temporary hut [622] improvised out of the materials available on the spot. Two small shrubs were tied together on two sides to form the roof of the hut. The Andamanese identified it to have been made for the Jarawa chief and his wife. Household objects lay scattered about. Three bamboo cylinders, closed at one end by the natural node, were found next to three of the fireplaces. They are used for carrying water. A dark coloured modern glass bottle, probably acquired during a raid, was also found. One fireplace had a small compartment enclosed by a few wooden posts a few yards off. The Andamanese identified it as an enclosure for keeping a child at a safe distance from the fire. This was probably correct as there was also a baby sling made of bark, exactly similar to that used by the Onge for carrying a baby on its mother's back (VON EICKSTEDT, 1934, fig. 211). At one corner of a fireplace the shavings of an arrowshaft or a bow were seen and nearby was a flat round pebble, one end of which was broken like that of a scraper (fig. 3). This scraper showed marks of red ochre on it. Beneath a tree a circular mat, sewn out of three pieces of long triangular palm-like leaves was spread out, while on its branches was found a beautiful specimen of an unstrung bow. It appeared to have been recently prepared and

[415] [824] [412] [177] [415] [354] [417] [855] [854] [412] [412]

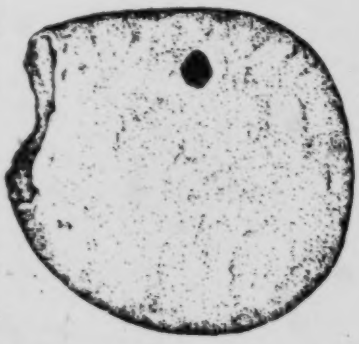

Fig. 3

[1] These two officers captured two Jarawa males, one adult and one boy, on October 19th 1948 on Spike Island. They were brought to Port Blair, wherefrom they managed to escape at night.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

were approaching an Onge camp. Everywhere they go they are accompanied by flies of all sizes, and in Little Andaman the swarms are so bad that the first stranger to land called a river after them, Bumila Creek, or fly river. Their flies betray the Onges long before the barking of their dogs – no human voice ever betrays their silent presence.

On Little Andaman today the Onges' tacit divisions of territory are of little importance, so heavy has been the fall in population, but they still keep out of areas belonging to other 'huts', even if the huts themselves have been abandoned. I never saw any disputes over territory, or the ownership of the area in which a pig was caught (and hence ownership of the pig). The Onges who accompanied me, possibly encouraged by the prestige value of a European with them, hunted wherever we went without anyone raising any protests. Nevertheless, I always took the precaution of giving anything I or my Indians took to the Onges of the nearest hut, invariably much to their delight.

Contrary to established opinion, communal huts on Little Andaman are not found only along the coasts; the majority, and certainly the best constructed, are in the interior. Togalanghe is one, and there are a number of permanently abandoned temporary camps near it.

Both the permanent and temporary huts or shelters of the Andamans resemble those of the Semang. The latter are extremely simple, especially in the dry season; there are no walls and only a very sloping roof of leaves, high at the front and very low at the back, the beds being put so that the feet face the low part of the roof. With the Semang and Aeta the beds may be made of bamboo; this is never the case in the Andamans, as there are no large bamboos in the archipelago (Brown was wrong in this respect. The few slender bamboos on Little Andaman are only usable for making drying racks, which are found only round the hut at Beniabol in the south. As the people were away when I went there, and the site was consequently completely deserted, I was unable to establish visually what they dried, but traces of fish, particularly pilchards, were indication enough.)

These temporary shelters are put up extremely quickly. Two poles less than two metres long for the front, and two more, thirty to forty centimetres long, for the back, are fixed firmly into the

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

attached. From it to the ring run a series of long batons, the 'ribs' of the umbrella. All along the length of the transverse bundle of canes are attached the ends of similar 'ribs', with supplementary canes at weak points. In this hut and in a number of others, extra rings of canes not supported by uprights are put in afterwards for extra strength, all securely lashed at every point.

At this stage of construction the hut would thus have consisted of a centre pole, first circle of uprights supporting the first ring of canes, second (unsupported) ring of canes fixed to the 'ribs' running over it, second concentric circle of uprights supporting the third ring of canes, the fourth (unsupported) ring of canes, and the third circle of uprights supporting the fifth and last ring of canes. Right across from the entrance to the opposite side of the hut ran the elliptical transverse bundle of canes. Tight rush fibre lashings at every crossing and meeting point held the whole frame solidly together.

The roof itself was then put on. This consists of palm leaves like huge fans. The Onges split these in halves down the centre vein and then lay one half on top of the other, head to tail, main ribs together. Four, six or possibly more reeds, three metres long and two to three centimetres in diameter, are then split in half lengthwise and laid out parallel on the ground. The pairs of palm leaves are then laid across the parallels and lashed securely with rush fibres, working from the bottom up, so that the edges of each pair cover the ribs of the pair below, making a water-shed. Seen from the inside of the finished hut the ribs, blackened by smoke, look almost like parallel vaulting.

In this particular hut there are beds for seven families (and their dogs) set as radii, and four transversely. Round the centre pole, on three sides only (leaving the fourth open for access to the central fire) are three fairly high platforms, rather smaller than the beds. Occasionally I saw young people sleeping on two of these, very cramped, climbing up a fixed ladder to reach them. The third platform was always used to keep meat out of the way of the dogs, and is clearly a recent innovation following their arrival in the island. The rough platforms forming the beds proper were about fifty centimetres off the ground, but this distance varies from place to place – in the south, at Beniabol I saw them about one metre off the ground, with the family fire under instead of beside them.